

Putting Feet to Your Faith

Acts 15:1-41

- Whenever God says “**rise up and share the gospel**”, you can be sure the enemy will respond with “**lets rise up and oppose**”, sometimes it’s with intimidation and threats, other times its with deception and lies, it doesn’t matter to him by which the truth is hindered just as long as it doesn’t take root and begin to spread. Paul and his companions have been traveling throughout modern day Turkey sharing the gospel of grace to both Jew and Gentile alike and many have come to know that Jesus is their Savior and that they can have a personal relationship with Him.

V1-41

- **V1** but not all are happy with this turn of events, Jewish men who are not from Antioch but Judea and claim to be believers are outraged that Paul or anyone would teach that you can be saved without first becoming circumcised. They are not content to keep their beliefs to themselves, but feel compelled to persuade others that putting one’s faith in Jesus for forgiveness of sins was wrong and an all out attack upon Judaism and the Law of Moses.
- **V2** there are some things when you hear it you leave alone and let it die out, but there are others that you quickly address in order to stomp it out before it causes irreparable damage, this is one of those times. Paul and Barnabas upon hearing what they were doing immediately confront them and a huge dispute arises and it’s suggested that they take the dispute to Jerusalem to be settled by the Apostles and Elders. What’s interesting is in **Gal 2:1-2** Paul says that what was suggested also had been revealed by the Spirit that he should go to Jerusalem.
- **V3** more confirmation happens as he is traveling to Jerusalem those who hear of the conversion of the Gentiles respond in joy, that’s the difference between Grace and Legalism, one brings joy while the other heaviness, Grace produces freedom and Legalism burden. **V4-6** after meeting with the Apostles and elders those who had been Pharisees and still held many of their views rose up to oppose what Paul had shared and it divided many within the council. **V7-11** so after much discussion and debate Peter stands up in order to speak out and it’s appropriate because it was Peter and not Paul who God first used to speak to about the gospel to the Gentiles.
- He tells them that there’s no difference between Jew and Gentile as God gave both the same Spirit in accordance to > **Eph 4:4-5**- one body, one Spirit, one faith, one baptism, one Lord, and that their hearts were purified by their faith and not their obedience to the Law, so why put a yoke on them that neither we nor our ancestors could follow, so just as were saved by grace through Jesus so are they. **V12** after Peter speaks of mistakes made in the past, Paul and Barnabas report on the blessings being bestowed upon the Gentiles in the present.

- **V13-21** then James speaks up, and as Peter spoke of the past and Paul of the present, he speaks of the future quoting **Amos 9:11-12**, and his word carried a lot of weight since he was the half brother of Jesus and everyone knew that he once did not believe or follows Jesus until he was converted so when he spoke everyone knew to listen as he didn't speak idol words. He tells them let's not trouble anyone with our petty hang-ups but share with them to stay away from > **1. Idolatry 2. Sexual immorality 3. Eating animals that have been strangled, 4. Drinking blood.**
- The first two we can easily understand as staying away from idolatry and immorality was basic principles of righteousness, but the next two need further examining. Strangulation and drinking blood were related because the Jews were told never to drink blood as it was unhealthy and most pagan rituals included consumption of blood, which is why it is so prevalent in the occult. This was more about conscience and culture and following **Rom 14:14-17**- than anything else.
- **V22-29** upon hearing all the evidence the church comes to an agreement and the council wisely sends news out that the Gentiles and the gospel of Grace is accepted. When God is moving the church will be united, when your wrestling with a decision or a doctrine its always wise to find out what the church says about it, its protection for you and those you influence, and beware of those who say you don't need the church > **Prov 22:28**- the wisdom of the church both presently and historically God uses to help us navigate through the landmines of life.
- **V30-35** what's interesting is in **V22** a man is sent with Paul and Barnabas named "**Barsabas**" his name means "**son of the Sabbath**" they send a son of the Sabbath to tell the gentiles they are now free to rest from the Law now that's funny. This letter produces three things > **1st** the unity of the church, we see a unified front in Antioch and Jerusalem concerning salvation as both Jew and Gentile are both accepted as equals in the faith. **2nd** we see encouragement, once Paul and Barnabas return with the letter from Jerusalem you can almost see a sigh of relief.
- **3rd** you see confirmation, as Judas and Silas operate in their spiritual gifts, then one goes back to the Apostles to report the work God is doing with the Gentiles, while Silas stay behind to join Paul and his evangelistic team, and finally Paul and Barnabas are teaching and discipling those who have an ear to hear the truth and the gospel is carrying on. **V36-38** Paul suggests a second missionary journey where they re-visit the churches they planted on the first missionary trip.
- To Paul the church was not a parking lot but a launching pad, and after resting up and being replenished and reinvigorated with fellowship he thought it time to set off and plant some more churches. Barnabas agreed with the plan but not with the people that Paul wanted to take, or not take, as Barnabas wanted John Mark his cousin to come and Paul said not a chance, on their first journey when the going got tough Mark left them and went home. At this time Paul is the clear leader of the group and Barnabas should have yielded to him but he was determined and not flexible refusing to leave him behind and it broke up a great duo. **V39-41** years later Mark became ready and Paul called him useful for the ministry but at this time he wasn't ready.